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ABSTRACT

The Values Scale (VS) is a self-report inventory of 106 scored items yielding 21 separate scales for the individual assessment of upper elementary school and middle school students as well as adult members of semi-skilled, skilled, clerical, managerial, and professional occupations. The VS, available in seven languages, measures several intrinsic and extrinsic values not assessed by existing measures. The scale attempts to permit understanding of work and general values that an individual upholds in various life roles and to assess the importance of the work role as a means of realizing values in the presence of other life roles. From a practical point of view, the instrument is seen as attractive, but with some ambiguity in the questions. The inventory is simple to administer and not difficult to score. The norming process included 6,792 individuals. Evidence for the validity and reliability of the VS is reviewed, although the reviewer finds the assumption of validity not entirely supported. In summary, a major strength of the instrument is its recent norming on a representative sample. The lack of evidence of validity is the most noticeable weakness. The VS has the potential to become a strong measure of values once stronger evidence of reliability and validity is amassed. (SLD)

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The Values Scale: A Review and Critique

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Title: The Values Scale
Authors: Donald E. Super and Dorothy D. Nevill
Publisher: Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc.
Date of Publication: 1986
Date of most recent norming sample: 1989
Time required to administer: 30-45 minutes
Selected Costs (as of 1987):

Test Booklets (reusable): $13.50/25 booklets
Answer Sheets: $14.50/50 sheets
Manual: $10.00
Specimen set: $11.00
Profiles: $10.50/50 sheets

Brief Description of Purpose and Nature of Test

The Values Scale (VS) is a self-report inventory. It consists of 106 scored items and yields 21 separate scales. It is suitable for the individual assessment of upper elementary or middle school pupils as well as with adult members of semi-skilled, skilled, clerical, sales, professional, and managerial occupations. This instrument is presently available in seven languages. The Manual states that the VS has been developed to be useful to both the researcher and the counselor.

The development of the VS was undertaken to provide an instrument that measures a number of intrinsic and extrinsic values not assessed by existing measures. The scale attempts to permit an understanding of both work and general values that individuals uphold in various life roles and to assess the importance of the work role as a means of realizing values in the presence of other life roles. The VS was developed by the Work Importance Study (WIS) which was undertaken by an international consortium of vocational psychologists. The psychologists from various countries worked collaboratively to develop an instrument which had utility for both cross-national and national research and service projects.

Some of the 21 values of the VS are independent while others are interrelated, but conceptually differentiable. The VS scales constitute a comprehensive sample of the universe of values revealed by the WIS literature review and the WIS research. The values measured are: Ability Utilization, Achievement, Advancement, Aesthetics, Altruism, Authority, Autonomy,

Creativity, Economic Rewards, Life Style, Personal Development, Physical Activity, Prestige, Risk, Social Interaction, Social Relations, Variety, Working Conditions, Cultural Identity, Physical Prowess, and Economic Security. The last three scales mentioned were not adopted by all the countries that participated in the WIS, but they are included in the United States version.

The VS content is completely verbal in nature. All items begin with the partial phrase, "It is now or will in the future be important for me to..." Respondents indicate the importance of each item on a 4-point continuum ranging from "of little or no importance" to "very important." The VS yields 21 raw scores plus a total raw score which can be converted into standard scores by referring to the back of the report form or to the Manual. Five items make up each scale and the scores on each scale can run from 5 to 20.

Practical Evaluation

Most of the test materials are attractive and durable. The test booklet may seem crowded since the authors put all 106 questions on less than two pages. The questions themselves are often vague and ambiguous. This can be seen in several questions including "Is it important for me to make life more beautiful" and "Is it important for me to use my strength." Does "make life more beautiful" refer to one's actual daily living or to the world in general? Does "strength" refer to mental, physical or overall general strengths? The manual gives no directions for responding to questions such as these when administering the inventory. Because of the ambiguity of some of the questions, face validity may be low with some individuals. The accompanying Manual is attractive and well organized. It consists of 56 pages and 44 tables. One interesting aspect of the Manual is the inclusion of tables allowing for the comparison of American scores to those scores acquired in other nations such as Canada, Italy, Portugal, Australia, Belgium and Yugoslavia.

The manual contains no information concerning administrator qualifications. The manual does, however, supply complete directions on how to administer the inventory. The directions are clear and easy to follow which allows the administrator to establish rapport easily with the test taker. This inventory would be simple to administer in both individual and group settings. Caution is needed when administering the inventory to younger children since the manual states

that the inventory is written at an eighth grade reading level. The inventory could be administered orally to those with reading difficulties or visual impairments. This instrument seems appropriate for use with any individual. As of the present time, a computer administration version is not available.

The VS answer sheet was designed to allow for hand scoring. There are five columns in the answer sheet and 21 rows, each corresponding to a separate value. The administrator simply adds up the scores across each row to determine the raw score on each value. The total raw score is obtained by adding the individual value raw scores and can be converted to standard scores by referring to the back of the report form or to the Manual. When accompanied by payment, the VS can also be mailed to the publisher for scoring.

Technical Evaluation

The current Manual is the first to publish representative norm data for the VS. The Manual provides norms on high school, university and adult individuals. Norms for the VS are expressed as standard scores with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. The design of the high school samples represent urban, suburban, and rural populations; various socioeconomic levels; and both sexes. The university samples were designed to represent arts, letters, science, and technical students as well as the major regions of the country. Sampling of adults was designed to obtain a diversity of regions, ages, and both sexes. The adult sample represents all the Holland-type occupations and the literate socioeconomic levels.

There were 6,792 individuals included in the norming processes. The procedures for deciding on representative high schools and universities are omitted from the Manual; however, a list of the high schools and universities sampled is included. For the adult population, data was collected in three primary ways. First, questionnaires were distributed during professional workshops and seminars. Second, divisions within the American Psychological Association were randomly sampled by mail. Third, graduate students administered the VS to employed adults of their acquaintance.

Reliability for the VS was measured by internal consistency and stability. Internal consistency (alpha coefficients) were used for high school, university, and adult samples. Stability (test-retest) was used for only the university sample. Alpha coefficients for all three populations ranged from .60 to .87 with most coefficients falling in the .70's. Test-retest correlations were first found to be lower than .70, so a second test-retest study was undertaken with a larger sample. Test-retest correlations ranged from .52 to .82. The stability data on the university sample is disappointing since the first sample had six scales with correlations lower than .70 and the second sample had nine scales with correlations below .70. Some questions about the confidence that can be placed in the individual scale scores arises from this reliability data.

The Manual states that the most important types of validity data are those showing that the instrument actually measures what theory has said it should measure. The authors continue by stating the most readily available validity data come from analyses of the psychometric qualities of the VS. One example of a psychometric quality that is used to support the validity claim is that some of the VS scales appear to tap more traditionally masculine values, whereas others tap more traditionally feminine values. This reviewer finds this assumption of validity by the authors inappropriate and unreasonable. It is also reported that close inspection of the item factor analyses gives support for the validity of the VS. This claim is assumed by the authors to be supported since there are strong similarities among the high school, university, and adult samples. Further validation stems from the VS being used in various research projects relating the VS scores to scores from other measures, or to other data that theory states should be related to the VS scales. The Manual includes three such studies that are offered as demonstrations of validity. Unfortunately as Luce (1991) points out, the test manual gives no indication of the size of this correlation, so the reviewer cannot readily evaluate the veracity of this claim. No evidence of predictive validity has been obtained since the instrument has not been made available long enough for longitudinal studies to have taken place. The authors state that they have intentions to conduct such studies and have made provisions for longitudinal tracking of subjects and criterion-data collection through more recent norming of the VS.

Reviewer Comments

Rousseau (1989) is concerned that the absence of a framework underlying the scales of the VS makes it difficult to gauge its thoroughness and theoretical representativeness. In addition, Slaney (1989) fails to find what theory is being referred to when the authors state that validity data are those that show that the instrument actually measures what theory has said it should measure. Slaney continues by saying that no studies were reported that directly address whether the individual scales measure what they suggest they measure and that the studies that are reported are difficult to evaluate because they are not easily available. Luce (1991) also mentions that the referenced studies are relatively inaccessible making evaluations difficult. Both Rousseau (1989) and Slaney (1989) state that there is a need for further studies to assess the validity of this instrument.

Slaney (1989) states that a unique and appealing aspect of the development of the scale is that it was designed to be used in national and cross-national research. This instrument was developed simultaneously by researchers in many countries and this unique feature allows for the scores to be compared across several different countries allowing the researchers to see existing cultural differences.

Both Rousseau (1989) and Slaney (1989) stress the use of the VS only in research or exploratory applications until further psychometric data are available. Slaney is concerned that the readers will not emphasize the exploratory use of the scales. He also states concern since the authors suggest the scales can be used in an ipsative manner when no rationale or data are provided in support of the ipsative use of the scales in career counseling. Harmon (1988) suggests that the VS only be used by counselors who are willing to 1) consult the manual carefully to determine which scales are reliable enough for use with the groups with which they work, 2) calculate the standard errors of measurement for the scales, and 3) use the measure, as it was intended, as a part of a careful and complete plan for assessment of career development. She feels it should only be used by the most psychometrically sophisticated counselors.

All of the reviewers address the limited nature of the existing research on the VS. Luce (1991), however, states that the VS already has demonstrated remarkable potential as a research instrument for studying cultures and values. Rousseau (1989) adds that it will be a useful and psychometrically sturdy inventory assessing values pertaining to vocational and career choice as well as being a potentially useful device for researchers investigating cross-cultural differences in values and needs in the labor force. Harmon (1988) states that the VS is a well developed and promising inventory up to this point; furthermore, she states that those who are interested in career development will find it to be a very useful tool for research. On the other hand, Slaney (1989) states that any suggested use seems premature.

Summary Evaluation

A major strength of the VS is the recent norming of the instrument on a representative sample. Although the Manual states precisely how the authors selected the adult population used in this sampling, no mention of the procedures were given for selecting a representative sample of high school and university subjects. This reviewer suggests that this oversight may have been intentional and suggest further caution when evaluating scores.

An additional strength of the VS stems from the ease of the administration and scoring of the inventory. The Manual offers clear and detailed instructions for the administrator and does not mention any qualifications needed for being able to administer the instrument. The inventory is also easy to take by subjects requiring only 30 to 45 minutes. This reviewer was able to complete the entire inventory in just 15 minutes. Although the inventory is easy to administer, the instrument does not appear to be easy to interpret. As previously mentioned, Harmon (1988) suggested that the instrument only be used by psychometrically knowledgeable individuals who are willing to study the Manual carefully and to calculate other needed measures to aid in the interpretation. Due to the lack of adequate support for the qualities of the VS, this reviewer agrees with Harmon.

The VS also has the advantage of being able to compare individual scores within and between cultures. The VS allows researcher to gain cross-cultural understanding of the relative

importance of various life roles and the values that individuals attempt to fulfill through work and other life roles. This inventory also takes into account both work values and general values whereas many other instruments do not.

The most noticeable weakness of this inventory is the lack of evidence for its validity. Whereas some reviewers such as Harmon (1988) believe that the research done to this stage supports evidence of validation others such as Slaney (1989) and Rousseau (1989) believe further evidence is needed to support validity. This reviewer also believes that further research on the validity of the VS is needed. Research supporting the validity by comparing the VS scores to the scores from other measures is needed with the United States version of the VS. All of the studies mentioned in the Manual were performed with versions of the VS from other countries. Studies of the predictive validity of the VS are needed and should be reported when the information is available.

The reliability of the VS may be considered another weakness. In reviewing the comments made by reviewers of the VS, all of them mention that the authors failed to mention the interval between the test-retest. The authors correct this oversight in the current edition of the Manual by stating that there was a two to four week interval. However, as mentioned earlier, alpha coefficients measuring internal consistency ranged from .60 to .87 while test-retest correlations measuring stability ranged from .52 to .82. These reliabilities are quite modest. One possible explanation for the modest reliabilities could be that each scale is made up of only 5 items.

In summary, this reviewer believes that the VS has the potential to become a strong measure of a persons values and the developers show ingenuity by making it applicable to many cultures. The uses of the VS in the future may be endless, but for the present time, stronger evidence of the instruments reliability and validity are needed to make it a well respected device for assessing values. Additionally, more representative subgroup norms would strengthen this instrument. This reviewer agrees with others that the VS should be reserved for research and exploratory applications until adequate validity information is provided.

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